

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Introduction

Pietilä, Tuulikki

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies
2009

Pietilä , T 2009 , Introduction . in World music : roots and routes . COLLeGIUM : studies across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences , no. 6 , Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies , pp. 3-13 . <
http://www.helsinki.fi/collegium/e-series/volumes/volume_6/006_02_Pietila.pdf >

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/324435>

acceptedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

Introduction

Tuulikki Pietilä

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki

The articles in this volume examine World Music from diverse perspectives and positions. The papers were originally presented as part of a two-day conference entitled “World Music and Small Players in the Global Music Industry”, and held in the Danish Institute for International Studies in Copenhagen in August 2005.¹ The conference gathered together researchers and practitioners with an interest in minor agents’ position and strategies in the music industry – minor agents referring to independent labels and producers in general and World Music producers and promoters in particular.

Altogether fifteen papers were presented in the conference, under the following subthemes: Current Trends in the Global Music Industry (papers by Dave Laing and Phil Hardy); World Music – Gains and Controversies for the Involved Agents (papers by Joe Boyd and John Collins); Small Agents in the South African Recording Industry (papers by David Coplan and Tuulikki Pietilä); Independent Labels’ Strategies in Denmark (papers by Henrik Bødker and Per Darmer); Politics of Representation and the World Music Industry (papers by Mike Alleyne and John Hutnyk); Developments in the World Music Institutions and Concept in the Nordic Countries (papers by Ole Reitov and Mik Aidt); Experiences of Small Agents in the Music Business (papers by Jonathan Feig, Jakob Hoff, and D. A. Sonneborn).

Eight of the papers are published here. Additionally, two papers (by David Coplan and by Tuulikki Pietilä) are available elsewhere.²

1 I wish to thank the Danish Research Agency (Forskningsrådet for Samfund og Erhverv) for providing the major part of the funding for the conference, and the Danish Institute for International Studies for providing additional funding and the facilities for the conference. Additionally, I wish to thank Per Darmer from Copenhagen Business School for help in organising the conference.

2 Coplan (2008, 359-65) and Pietilä (2009a).

The label World Music appeared in Western markets and mass media in the mid-1980s. The term was chosen by a group of British independent record labels and music journalists meeting in London, with the aim of launching it as a marketing category for music that did not quite fit any of the existing racks in retail outlets (fRoots Magazine 1987). What was originally a brief campaign in the record stores eventually became an institution: today World Music has its own section in record stores, and there are trade fairs, festivals, radio programmes, magazines and organisations dedicated solely to it.

World Music was a new title in marketing terms but it had already appeared in academic literature in the early 1960s. In that context, World Music was used to refer to non-Western music; it had a relativist ring to it, emphasising musical plurality and contesting the tendency to define music as Western European art music (Feld 1994b, 266; Taylor 1997, 2). Such relativist and liberalist flavours were imported into the usage of the term as a marketing category. From the very beginning, the World Music industry has comprised an interesting combination of business and educational interests, in that it has endeavoured to introduce Other peoples' music to Western audiences and educate them about its social, political and cultural context simultaneously.

Good causes have produced some controversial consequences, however.³ In diverse ways, the World Music industry has been found to exploit rather than enrich non-Western peoples. At the most concrete level, this has meant appropriation of ownership by Western "arrangers" of music without proper acknowledgment of the original composers, or the paying of meager salaries or inadequate royalties to non-Western musical collaborators (e.g., Feld 1994a, 1994b, 2000; Taylor 1997, 40–63). Such practices are often related to simplified images of non-Western cultures that the World Music industry at its worst tends to perpetuate. These include, for instance, presumptions that the music of non-Western peoples is traditional and therefore belongs to the public sphere and not to any particular individual or group. The more fundamental assumption behind this idea is often that authorship and ownership are Western concepts that do not exist in non-Western cultures where homogeneity and collectivity supposedly reign over individuality and distinction. The notions of individual authorship and ownership are indeed foreign to some non-Western people. However, even such communities have usually their own conceptions of how music is created and whom songs belong to. D. A. Sonneborn (in this volume) discusses practices of channelling royalties to communities that do not acknowledge individual copyright, showing that a Western institution, such as Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, can accommodate itself to such non-Western

3 For a more comprehensive summary of the discussion on the economic and symbolic forms of appropriation in the World Music institution, see Pietilä 2008, 5.

ideas and practices. If it is possible for them, why would it not be possible for recording and publishing companies functioning on a commercial basis?

Economic forms of appropriation in the World Music industry are often intertwined with symbolic forms of appropriation, such as the above-mentioned images of non-Western societies as collective, traditional and untouched by money economy. Indeed, the World Music industry has been criticised for the nature of the representations and images it perpetuates of the non-Western peoples, whose music it showcases. In the mid-1980s, when the marketing category was introduced, much of the included music was from Africa and the African diaspora (see John Collins in this volume). Gradually, however, the category has come to embrace music of non-Western origins in general, as well as that of European and American minorities. In that way, the World Music category lumps together a wide diversity of music, for which the common denominator is a social and territorial location in the world system rather than a musical genre. World Music has thus become a label for music that originates outside the dominant Euro-American world, that is, music of marginal peoples (Erlmann 1994, 179; Feld 1994b, 266; Mitchell 1993, 310). The way World Music is produced on records and presented on stage and on record covers – the performers clad in ethnic costumes, feathers and with painted faces – emphasises traditionalism, exoticism and primitive naturalness. In representing the Other as pre-modern, the images reproduce the hierarchical world order (see e.g., Erlmann *ibid.*; Taylor 1997, 19–27).

In a way that resembles Adorno's (1991) views on culture industries, Erlmann (1994, 1996) regards World Music as an example of late capitalism's systemic reproduction of itself through the production of difference. Regardless of the celebratory rhetoric of multiculturalism, Erlmann (1994, 470) finds no space for authentic Otherness and difference in World Music, only Otherness imagined and produced by the system in order to maintain itself. What the late capitalist system produces in reality is then the "absence of the Other" (*ibid.*, 468). Consequently, "a serious analysis of global musics can only be written from a subject position in the West" (Erlmann 1996, 470).

Critical discussion on the World Music industry thus draws attention to the ways the Other is made to serve the same Western interests it has served for hundreds of years, providing the raw material (in this case music) to be processed for Western consumption. This also includes the images of the Other as pre-modern or primitive against which Western self-understanding of its own civilised nature can be constructed and reflected. In this regard, the critique of the World Music industry resembles that of post-colonial studies on the West's tendency to produce orientalist and exotic representations of the Other in order to construct a contrary image of itself (e.g., Said 1978). Erlmann's view above exemplifies this line of criticism, but oddly, it lends itself to an even more drastic abolition of the Other. In placing the only

authentically existing subject position in the West and denying any possible agency for non-Western peoples, Erlmann's view ends up eliminating the need to even consider and study the Other. Chapters by Mike Alleyne and John Hutnyk (in this volume) discuss the ways in which some specific Others and their music are diminished to images that dilute, romanticise, demonise or otherwise misrepresent them. However, in this volume we are not satisfied with examining the World Music institution only from a Western perspective while regarding non-Western participants as its silent victims. The Others' understanding of themselves and the world are included and examined along with the ways the industry supports Western interests.

John Hutnyk (in this volume) is as critical as Erlmann about the rhetoric of multiculturalism inherent in World Music. Hutnyk maintains that behind the celebrated ideals of hybridity and multiculturalism lies a much harsher reality with antagonistic attitudes towards the Others. He suggests that to disregard this reality is frivolous; the British-Asian artists whom he examines refuse to act as if music were dissociated from politics – quite the contrary, they underline the linkage between the arts and activist politics. The kinds of performances that Hutnyk describes require audiences to probe their minds and the received facts of their lived-in world on a deeper level, and in a more unsettling and challenging way, than what is usually required by an aid concert or a World Music concert audience. In comparison, the latter contexts offer more conventional and constructive rather than radical solutions to world problems – problems that are furthermore depicted as lying out there, far away, somewhere else and not amongst us in the comfortable concert setting.

We should also consider what motivates people to perpetuate or resist certain kinds of sounds and images of Otherness. With what kinds of needs and aspirations does World Music resonate among Western audiences? Why does World Music suit or not suit the tastes of the non-Western peoples among whom the music originates? People who enjoy certain kinds of music do not usually have in mind the aim of maintaining or resisting a "capitalist system" or certain representations of the world that come with the music; they are usually moved by a different kind of passion. Frith (1988) has suggested that Western audiences find a simplicity and authenticity in World Music that they feel is lost in their own lives. He regards World Music as providing a sense of roots and authenticity – something that Western people earlier sought in rock music but can no longer find in that genre.

In this regard, World Music serves what might be described as a postmodern identity project of Western persons seeking new wholeness for their fragmented selves in cultures and places imagined as old, integrated and pristine. Friedman's (1994, 192–193) description of the postmodernist life strategy of the Western "nouveaux riches and wealthy seekers" is succinct here, as he writes: "The postmodernist stands alone [in the global system] insofar as his potential allies are all fantasies, primitives-for-us, full of wisdom and close to nature in a way that

deprives them of their humanity except as a humanity-for-us". The post-modern project of salvaging oneself through the imagined Other is wed with the modern project of salvaging the (imagined) Other in those branches of the World Music institution, which aim to enlighten the public about the economic, political and other problems that often besiege the musicians behind the up-beat music they produce. Yet even this consciousness-raising intention can become a fragmented and superficial mismatch of "lifestyle shopping" by World Music audiences. This is depicted by Hutnyk (2000, 23, 25) in his description of a WOMAD festival and what he calls its "cottage capitalism": the numerous little stalls either selling "ethnic artefacts" or canvassing for signatures to "good causes" – which range from campaigns to protect the cassowary to those for political support for East Timor or Tibet. He (ibid., 25) writes: "What sort of coherence might be found in the different politics on the display tables remains unclear: some sign a petition or buy a badge to wear upon their lapel, or scarf or funny hat. Many more buy funny hats".

Music is a way of marking a lifestyle and making a social distinction. This applies both to Western and non-Western audiences. The musical tastes of the two spheres are sometimes so different that they tend to form two distinct markets. World Music is truly a Western phenomenon also in the sense that such a category does not usually exist in the countries from where the music originates. In the home countries the music is categorised according to finer, local labels such as, for instance, *highlife* or *palmwine* in Ghana, *fuji* or *juju* in Nigeria, or *isicathamiya* and *mbaqanga* in South Africa. Sometimes, as with the globally popular Senegalese musician, Youssou N'Dour, the artist may make different recordings for different markets; one for the domestic African, another for the European, and possibly yet another for the American market.

A vivid description of the divergent musical tastes clashing in the recording studio is offered by Joe Boyd (in this volume), an experienced producer of World Music and other kinds of music. According to Boyd, Euro-American audiences seek "authenticity" in World Music, which means "virtuosity, a sense of roots and tradition, the spontaneous energy of live recording session where great musicians interact in real time". However, once non-Western musicians get into the studio in order to make a World Music record, they are often more interested in musical experimentation by modifying traditional sounds with hi-tech productions and electrified instruments. John Collins (in this volume) describes a similar discrepancy between the expectations of World Music and domestic audiences for Ghanaian music. Both Boyd and Collins find in the World Music industry a means to re-elevate the value of traditional music among the people to whose traditions it belongs. They depict well the contrast and irony in the longing of Western audiences for traditional music from musicians and peoples who themselves yearn for modern, electrically-amplified sounds. Thus, if Western people search for an escape from the alienation of their post-modern life in the "pure" and "rootsy" sounds of World

Music, non-Western people seem to be searching for ways and signs of modern life in Western electric sounds and genres.

Indeed, there has been so much criticism in the academic literature on the Western exoticising and orientalising tendencies inherent in the World Music industry that it is high time to balance the picture by drawing attention to the pure and rather innocent curiosity, fascination and enthusiasm that Western and non-Western people equally feel in regard to each other's musical (and life) styles. As the examples given by Boyd and Collins show, there is a mutual curiosity over Otherness and Others' music that moves Western and non-Western people alike. Nothing bad intrinsically in this fascination, even though it can turn into fetishising and exoticising the Other – as easily among non-Western people as it does among Westerners. The discrepancy in power and technology means, however, that the Western images of the Other circulate more widely than *vice versa*, as Mike Alleyne's paper reminds us. He discusses how Caribbean musics, calypso and reggae in particular, continually become diminished in their aural, visual and textual qualities as they are produced by the multinational record companies for the world markets. In contrast to what Alleyne describes as the dilution of aesthetic and cultural authenticity of the Caribbean music by the major music industry, Collins's paper emphasises the many positive developments that World Music industry has engendered for Ghanaian music, important among these being the increased interest in "authentic"– traditional and neo-traditional – musical forms.

The availability of recorded and live music from all over the world, which enables the contemplation of Otherness, is an example and result of globalisation. Globalisation is often depicted as decreasing the importance of distance and time in the organisation of human activity or as a "time-space compression" (Harvey 1989). The developments in transportation and communication technologies and the concomitant increase in the mobility of capital, people and goods are described as leading to porous borders and fluid identities. With the growing ease and importance of connection to potentially distant places, globalisation is also seen as a disembedding process, where physical localities and local relations become relatively less important for self-definition than they used to be (e.g., Giddens 1990). In its operations, the major music industry has long sought a global reach. The structures of the music industry have themselves undergone a process of accelerating globalisation especially since the end of the 1970s, when companies started to respond to a downturn in sales by a wave of takeovers and mergers (Burnett 1996, 50–59). The result was a decreasing number of companies with an increasing international reach, achieved through the buying-out of local companies and the opening of local subsidiaries. Consequently, in 2008 four major companies, Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group and EMI, reportedly control about 78 per cent of the world's record sales (*The View* 2009).

European authors' collection societies' territorial coverage and operating principles are also undergoing changes. In collecting and distributing royalties for composers, song writers and publishers, collection societies are essential institutions in the music industry, yet research and literature on them is much scarcer than on the recording industry. Phil Hardy's article reveals that in the last two decades, the national and reciprocal basis of the collection societies has been under pressure from international record companies, competition authorities and the online digital market. Consequently, there have been attempts at creating a more international, pan-European body for copyright licensing administration. Hardy's paper shows how political and economic interests as well as power differentials on diverse institutional levels constantly shape the operating principles in and between the collection societies.

In music industry just like elsewhere, globalisation thus tends to result in increasing internationalisation and a concentration of power among fewer players, and a streamlining and mainstreaming of activities over larger territories. However, the World Music industry, a small niche in the global music industry, contains features of an alternative mode of globalisation to that of the major music industry. Dave Laing (in this volume) describes the transnational major companies' mode of operation as a "centre to periphery panoptic command structure", and contrasts that with the World Music industry, which he describes as a "genre-market" functioning through specialised institutions and networks across national boundaries. This distinction highlights the fact that World Music has always been and remains a domain within the global music industry in which minor actors, such as independent record labels, freelance journalists and music professionals predominate instead of the major players. Because it is based on networks of numerous actors, controversy and diversity in the ideologies, definitions and boundaries are inherent in the World Music industry. Operations based on face-to-face interactions and networks are no less global than those based on large units where employees of the same parent company largely remain anonymous to each other. This reminds us that globalisation does not necessarily mean increased abstraction and a distancing of human relations.

Against the decreasing significance of locality in many forms of globalisation, World Music is an instance of the emphasised importance of locality, albeit not one without contradictions. As discussed above, much of the attraction in World Music derives from the images and atmospheres it brings from other cultures, represented often as more localised, romanticised and unchanging than they are in reality. World Music may give the listener a feeling of being able to command the perplexing cacophony that the globalised media and excessive information produces; it offers a simplified way to explore the world, and map the world through music. In practice, the feeling of command and comprehension may well be as imaginary as the places and cultures that the World Music industry portrays. However, such a

re-emphasis on locality – real and imagined – is frequently an accompaniment of globalisation and a cross-current against its tendencies towards abstraction and the standardisation of practices.

World Music embodies such contradiction in the way that the seemingly conflicting qualities of authenticity and hybridity are both typically listed as its key characteristics (Frith 2000; Stokes 2004; Taylor 1997). Authenticity refers to the idea of a fixed location and locality and to an idea of roots and traditions. By contrast, hybridity refers to the idea that a musical piece is a composition of styles and elements from diverse sources, thereby implying that there are no pure, unchanged traditions in the world.

According to Frith (2000, 312), hybridity emphasises the free flow of styles and trade of sounds. Such emphasis makes World Music a seemingly suitable ally for neo-liberal ideologies and liberal policies of multiculturalism. On the other hand, part of the authenticity claim of World Music often comes from its allegedly political role in its home environment (Pietilä 2009b; Stokes 2004, 59). Herein lies another paradox: music that is marketed as fiercely resistant and oppositional to the power structures at its home – whether it is Algerian *rai* music (Schade-Poulsen 1999), Zimbabwean *chimurenga* (Turino 2000), or South African *mbaqanga* (Meintjes 2003; Pietilä 2009b) – becomes compliant and harmless dance and party music in the international markets. In some cases, such as reggae, the attribute of political resistance has been one of the key issues in making the genre a global success both in musical and commercial terms. In the Western markets, however, the resistance of reggae has become attenuated, referring more often today to a laid-back than an active mindset, and as Mike Alleyne (in this volume) shows, with an emphasis on the complications of love relationships rather than politics.

In its representation of hybridity and authentic locality, World Music epitomises the contradictions and paradoxes of globalisation, such as a simultaneous attempt to global connectedness and distinction. Self-reflexivity is often considered a modern feature (Giddens 1991). With transnational media, distant others become part of the process of self-reflection. Images of Others provide material and fantasies for self-construction. These representations enter one's self-understanding, and thus locality and identity are increasingly created in the context of a global imagery of places and ways of life.

There are great differences in access to the global media, though. In much of Africa, cassettes – often pirated – are still the most common sound-carriers of music and only a small minority of people can enjoy regular and reliable online access. Online distribution of music and the creation of a virtual fan-base is so far more viable for Western artists, and even among them often works best for already known artists. D. A. Sonneborn (in this volume) advises bands to create

local popularity and fan communities first, and success in world markets only secondly. This is a sobering piece of advice, because for most bands in the world live concerts remain a more reliable source of income than their recorded music.

The spread of digital technology and online distribution of music are unlikely to diminish the importance and popularity of live performance, however. Quite the contrary: the moments of live interaction and lived reality continue to draw and fascinate people amidst the increasing presence of virtual realities in their lives. By examining the statistics, Dave Laing (in this volume) finds that the live performance is the largest and fastest-expanding sub-sector of World Music industry, and apparently it is a growing sector also in the whole global music industry. This shows again how abstract and disembedding processes of globalisation, such as online downloading of music, simultaneously create space and demand for embodied, participatory and situated experiences.

In the last chapter of this volume, Jonathan Feig discusses live performances and the different stage roles available and suitable for different musicians. By comparing the distinct careers of six violin players, he reminds us of the centrality of live improvisation in music, often barely captured on record or adequately appreciated by the recording industry. He also highlights the importance of acknowledging the particular personality of each musician, because it influences the roles in which he or she feels most at ease and creative. Improvisation and a suitable distribution of roles are what make a performance memorable and the band, as well as the individual artists, unique. When all the pieces fall into place, professionalism is revealed in the creative and virtuosic mixing of musical elements from diverse sources and traditions, which are thereby renewed. This is hybridity and World Music at its best and as practised, and discourses can only go so far in their attempt to capture them.

References

- Adorno, Theodor 1991. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. Edited by J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge.
- Burnett, Robert 1996. *The Global Jukebox: The International Music Industry*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Coplan, David 2008. *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Erlmann, Veit 1994 "Africa Civilised, Africa Uncivilised: Local Culture, World System and South African Music", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20(2), 165–179.
- 1996. "The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s", *Public Culture* 8, 467–487.
- Feld, Steven 1994a. Notes on 'World Beat'. In Charles Keil & Steven Feld *Music Grooves*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- 1994b. From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of 'World Music' and 'World Beat'. In Charles Keil & Steven Feld *Music Grooves*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- 2000. "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music", *Public Culture*, 12(1), 145–171.
- Friedman, Jonathan 1994. *Cultural Identity & Global Process*. London: Sage Publications.
- Frith, Simon 1988. *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- 2000. The Discourse of World Music. In Georgina Born & David Hesmondhalgh (eds.) *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- fRoots Magazine 1987. "History of World Music": << http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world_music_history/minutes >>.
- Giddens, Anthony 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- 1991. *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Harvey, David 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hutnyk, John 2000. *Critique of Exotica*. London: Pluto Press.
- Meintjes, Louise 2003. *Sound of Africa! Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Mitchell, Tony 1993. "World Music and the Popular Music Industry: An Australian View", *Ethnomusicology* 37, 309–337.
- Pietilä, Tuulikki 2008. Singing in the Dark? World Music and Issues of Power and Agency. In Niels Fold & Marianne Nylandsted Larsen (eds.) *Globalization and Restructuring of African Commodity Flows*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- 2009a. "Whose works and what kinds of rewards: the persisting question of ownership and control in the South African and global music industry", *Information, Communication & Society* 12(2), 229–250.
- 2009b. "Searching for Africa: World Music and *kwaito*" (forthcoming).
- Said, Edward 1978. *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Schade-Poulsen, Marc 1999. *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Rai*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- Stokes, Martin 2004. "Music and the Global Order", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, 47–72.
- Taylor, Timothy 1997. *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*. New York & London: Routledge.
- The View* 2009. "Global recorded music market falls 7% in 2008; UMG remains the market leader", Feb 10, 2009.
- Turino, Thomas 2000. *Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.